

"NARROW ESCAPES,"

THE SUBJECT OF DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

The Text Being Taken from Job 19: 23, "I Am Escaped with the Skin of My Teeth"—Don't Confound Christianity.

BROOKLYN, July 29.—Rev. Dr. Talmage has selected as the subject for his sermon for to-day, through the press: "Narrow Escapes," the text being taken from Job 19: 23, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth."

Job had it hard. What with boils, and bereavements, and bankruptcy, and a fool of a wife, he wished he was dead; and I do not blame him. His flesh was gone, and his bones were dry. His teeth wasted away until nothing but the enamel seemed left. He cries out, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth."

There has been some difference of opinion about this passage. St. Jerome and Schultens, and Drs. Good, and Poole, and Barnes have all tried their forceps on Job's teeth. You deny my interpretation, and say, "What did Job know about the enamel of the teeth?" He knew everything about it. Dental surgery is almost as old as the earth. The mummies of Egypt, thousands of years old, are found to-day with gold filling in their teeth. Ovid, and Horace, and Solomon, and Moses wrote about these important factors of the body. To other provoking complaints, Job, I think, has added an exasperating toothache, and, putting his hand against the inflamed face, he says, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth."

A very narrow escape, you say, for Job's body and soul; but there are thousands of men who make just as narrow escape for their soul. There was a time when the partition between them and ruin was no thicker than a tooth's enamel; but, as Job finally escaped, so have they. Thank God! Thank God!

Paul expresses the same idea by a different figure when he says that some people are "saved as by fire." A vessel at sea is in flames. You go to the stern of the vessel. The boats have shoved off. The flames advance; you can endure the heat no longer on your face. You slide down on the side of the vessel, and hold on with your fingers, until the forked tongue of the fire begins to lick the back of your hand, and you feel that you must fall, when one of the life-boats comes back, and the passengers say they think they have room for one more. The boat swings under you—you drop into it—you are saved. So some men are pursued by temptation until they are partially consumed, but after all get off—"saved as by fire." But I like the figure of Job a little better than that of Paul, because the pulpit has not worn it out; and I want to show you, if God will help, that some men make narrow escape for their souls, and are saved as "with the skin of their teeth."

It is as easy for some people to look to the Cross as for you to look to this pulpit. Mild, gentle, tractable, loving, you expect them to become Christians. You go over to the store and say, "Grandson joined the church yesterday." Your business comrades say, "That is just what might have been expected; he always was of that turn of mind." In youth, this person whom I describe was always good. He never laughed when it was improper to laugh. At 7, he could sit an hour in church, perfectly quiet, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, but straight into the eyes of the minister, as though he understood the whole discussion about the eternal decrees. He never upset things, nor lost them. He floated into the kingdom of God so gradually that it is uncertain just when the matter was decided.

Here is another one, who started in life with an uncontrollable spirit. He kept the nursery in an uproar. His mother found him walking on the edge of the house roof to see if he could balance himself. There was no horse he dare not ride—no tree he could not climb. His boyhood was a long series of predicaments; his manhood was reckless; his midlife very wayward. But now he is converted, and you go over to the store and say, "Arkwright joined the church yesterday." Your friends say, "It is not possible! You must be joking!" You say, "No; I tell you the truth. He joined the church." Then they reply, "There is hope for any of us if old Arkwright has become a Christian!"

In other words, we all admit that it is more difficult for some men to accept the Gospel than for others.

I may be addressing some who have outgrown churches, and Bibles, and Sundays, and who have at present no intention of becoming Christians themselves, but just to see what is going on; and yet you may find yourself sampling before you hear the end, as "with the skin of your teeth." I do not expect to waste this hour. I have seen boats go off from Cape May or New Beach, and drop their nets, and haul up some sharks, pulling in

the nets without having caught a single fish. It was not a good day, or they had not the right kind of a net. But we expect no such excursion to-day. The water is full of fish; the wind is in the right direction; the Gospel net is strong. O, thou, who didst help Simon and Andrew to fish, show us to-day how to cast the net on the right side of the ship!

Listen to two or three questions. Are you as happy as you used to be when you believed in the truth of the Christian religion? Would you like to have your children travel on in the road in which you are now traveling? You had a relative who professed to be a Christian, and was thoroughly consistent, living and dying in the faith of the Gospel. Would you not like to live the same quiet life, and die the same peaceful death? I received a letter, sent me by one who has rejected the Christian religion. It says: "I am old enough to know that the joys and pleasures of life are evanescent, and to realize the fact that it must be comfortable in old age to believe in something relative to the future, and to have a faith in some system that proposes to save. I am free to confess that I would be happier if I could exercise the simple and beautiful faith that is possessed by many whom I know. I am not willingly out of the church or out of the faith. My state of uncertainty is one of unrest. Sometimes I doubt my immortality, and look upon the death-bed as the closing scene, after which there is nothing. What shall I do that I have not done?" Ah! scepticism is a dark and doleful land. Let me say that this Bible is either true or false. If it be false, we are as well off as you; if it be true, then which of us is safer?

Let me also ask whether your trouble has not been that you confounded Christianity with the inconsistent character of some who profess it. You are a lawyer. In your profession there are mean men and dishonest men. Is that anything against the law? You are a doctor. There are unskilled and contemptible men in your profession. Is that anything against medicine? You are a merchant. There are thieves and defrauders in your business. Is that anything against merchandise? Behold, then, the unfairness of charging upon Christianity the wickedness of its disciples. We admit some of the charges against those who profess religion. Some of the most gigantic swindles of the present day have been carried on by members of the church. There are men in the churches who would not be trusted for five dollars without good collateral security. They leave their business dishonesties in the vestibule of the church as they go in and sit at the communion. Having concluded the sacrament, they get up, wipe the wine from their lips, go out, and take up their sins where they left off. To serve the devil is their regular work; to serve God a sort of play spell. With a Sunday sponge they expect to wipe off from their business slate all the past week's inconsistencies. You have no more right to take such a man's life as a specimen of religion than you have to take the twisted iron and split timbers that lie on the beach at Coney island as a specimen of an American ship. It is time that we drew a line between religion and the frailties of those who profess it.

To-day I invite you back into the good old-fashioned religion of your fathers—to the God whom they worshipped, to the Bible they read, to the promises on which they leaned, to the cross on which they hung their eternal expectations. You have not been happy a day since you swung off; you will not be happy a minute until you swing back.

Again: There may be some of you who, in the attempt after a Christian life, will have to run against powerful passions and appetites. Perhaps it is a disposition to anger that you have to contend against; and perhaps, while in a very serious mood, you hear of something that makes you feel that you must swear or die. I know of a Christian man who was once so exasperated that he said to a mean customer, "I can not swear at you myself, for I am a member of the church; but if you will go downstairs my partner in business will swear at you." All your good resolutions heretofore have been torn to tatters by explosions of temper. Now there is no harm in getting mad if you only get mad at sin. You need to bridle and saddle these hot-breathed passions, and with them ride down injustice and wrong. There are a thousand things in the world that we ought to be mad at. There is no harm in getting red hot if you only bring to the forge that which needs hammering. A man who has no power of righteous indignation is an imbecile. But be sure it is a righteous indignation, and not a petulance that blurs, and unravels, and depletes the soul.

There is a large class of persons in midlife who have still in them appetites that were aroused in early manhood, at a time when they prided themselves on being a "little fast," "high liver," "free and easy," "half-fallows well met." They are now saying in compound interest for decades they collected twenty years

ago. Some of you are trying to escape, and you will—yet very narrowly, "as with the skin of your teeth." God and your own soul only know what the struggle is. Omnipotent grace has pulled out many a soul that was deeper in the mire than you are. They line the beach of heaven—the multitude whom God has rescued from the thrall of suicidal habits. If you this day turn your back on the wrong, and start anew, God will help you. Oh, the weakness of human help! Men will sympathize for a while and then turn you off. If you ask for their pardon they will give it, and say they will try you again; but, falling away again under the power of temptation, they cast you off forever. But God forgives seventy times seven; yea, seven hundred times; yea, though this be the ten thousandth time he is more earnest, more sympathetic, more helpful this last time than when you took your first misstep.

If, with all the influences favorable for a right life, men make so many mistakes, how much harder it is when, for instance, some appetite thrusts its iron grapple into the roots of the tongue, and pulls a man down with hands of destruction! If, under such circumstances, he break away, there will be no sport in the undertaking, no holiday enjoyment, but a struggle in which the wrestlers move from side to side, and bend, and watch for an opportunity to get in a heavier stroke, until with one final effort, in which the muscles are distended, and the veins stand out, and the blood starts, the swarthy habit falls under the knee of the victor—escaped at last as with the skin of his teeth.

The ship Emma, bound from Gottenburg to Harwich, was sailing on, when the man on the lookout saw something that he pronounced a vessel bottom up. There was something on it that looked like a sea gull, but was afterward found to be a waving handkerchief. In the small boat the crew pushed out to the wreck, and found that it was a capsized vessel, and that three men had been digging their way out through the bottom of the ship. When the vessel capsized they had no means of escape. The captain took his penknife and dug away through the planks until his knife broke. Then an old nail was found, with which they attempted to scrape their way out of the darkness, each one working until his hand was well-nigh paralyzed, and he sank back faint and sick. After long and tedious work, the light broke through the bottom of the ship. A handkerchief was hoisted. Help came. They were taken on board the vessel and saved. Did ever men come so near a watery grave without dropping into it? How narrowly they escaped—escaped only "with the skin of their teeth."

Try this God, ye who have had the bloodhounds after you, and who have thought that God had forgotten you. Try him, and see if he will not help. Try him, and see if he will not pardon. Try him, and see if he will not save. The flowers of spring have no bloom so sweet as the flowering of Christ's affections. The sun hath no warmth compared with the glow of his heart. The waters have no refreshment like the fountain that will slake the thirst of thy soul. At the moment the reindeer stands with his lip and nostril thrust into the cool mountain torrent, the hunter may be coming through the thicket. Without cracking a stick under his foot, he comes close by the stag, aims his gun, draws the trigger, and the poor thing rears in its death agony and falls backward, its antlers crashing on the rocks; but the panting heart that drinks from the water brooks of God's promise shall never be fatally wounded, and shall never die.

This world is a poor portion for your soul, oh business man! An eastern king had graven upon his tomb two fingers, representing as sounding upon each other with a snap, and under that the motto, "All is not worth that." Apicius Coelius hanged himself because his steward informed him that he had only eighty thousand pounds sterling left. All of this world's riches make but a small inheritance for a soul. Robespierre attempted to win the applause of the world; but when he was dying a woman came rushing through the crowd crying to him: "Murderer of my kindred, descend to hell, covered with the curses of every mother in France!" Many who have expected the plaudits of the world have died under its Anathema Maranatha.

Oh, find your peace in God. Make one strong pull for heaven. No half-way work will do it. There sometimes comes a time on ship-board when everything must be sacrificed to save the passengers. The cargo is nothing, the rigging nothing. The captain puts the trumpet to his lip and shouts, "Cut away the mast!" Some of you have been tossed and driven, and you have, in your effort to keep the world, well nigh lost your soul. Until you have decided this matter, let everything else go. Overboard with all those other anxieties and burdens! You will have to drop the sails of your pride, and cut away the mast! With one earnest cry for help, put your cause into the hand of him who helped Paul out of the breakers of Malta, and who, above the shrill blast of the

wrathiest tempest that ever blackened the sky or shook the ocean, can hear the faintest imploration for mercy. I shall conclude, feeling that some of you, who have considered your case hopeless, will take heart again, and that with a blood-red earnestness, such as you have never experienced before, you will start for the good land of the Gospel—at last to look back, saying, "What a great risk I ran! Almost lost, but saved! Just got through, and no more! Escaped by the skin of my teeth."

RARE AND READABLE.

Camphor grows on trees in Japan. Kangaroos have been known to jump thirty-four feet.

The coal fields of the United States cover 194,000 square miles.

The Union Pacific railroad owns or controls 7,681 miles of line.

The original home of the bison was in the Great Salt Lake valley.

It is now asserted that Argentina exports more wheat to the markets of Europe than the United States.

Flaming pigeons traveled from Norway, Mich., to Milwaukee, a distance of 210 miles, in just eight hours.

The late Dr. Parkes is reputed to have said: "When a man dies of typhoid fever somebody ought to hang."

A Chicago man has invented an apparatus which he claims will reduce the price of soda water to one cent a glass.

Mrs. Margaret McDowal, a Scotch woman, who died in 1768, aged 106 years, married and survived thirteen husbands.

A recent English invention is the "pulsimeter," a watch made especially for the use of physicians in timing their patient's pulses.

A cab shaped like a bathtub, in which the passengers either sit or recline as if in a bed, is in use in Berlin. It has three wheels and is propelled by a naphtha motor.

Bachelors in England were subjected to a double tax on their male and female servants in 1785. By the law of 1695 all bachelors over twenty-five years of age were taxed.

The prize given by La Salle college for superior excellence in bread-making is a miniature loaf of bread in solid gold. It is worn this year as a watch charm by Miss Sarah Bond of Boston.

Little Ora, the 11-year-old daughter of Samuel P. Drumm, justice of the peace at Layton, Pa., was killed by a Baltimore and Ohio train. The great-grandparents of the child met a similar death near the same place a few years ago.

The magnificent collection of Greek statuary sent to the World's fair by the Greek government has been purchased for, and sent to Beloit college by Lucius G. Fisher of Chicago, who prepared the first student for the college. Mr. Fisher has been made a master of arts and an alumnus by the college in recognition of his gift.

An old man living in London, Pa., can boast of having married seven wives. His first wife lived seven years, his second wife two years, his third wife four years, his fourth wife fourteen months, his fifth wife ran away with another man five weeks after marriage, his sixth wife lived fifteen years. The last wife is still alive but the old man has the temerity to say that No. 6 is the best wife of the lot.

Probably no woman after the age of eighty can show such a record as that of Julia Smith of Glastonbury, Conn. At the age of eighty-two she had a lawsuit in her town which was decided in her favor and was then appealed by the defendant to the court of common pleas in Hartford, resulting in a long trial, the Smith sisters coming over every day, Julia being the brightest witness on the stand, in spite of her four-score years and two. At the age of eighty-four she published her translation of the bible. At the age of eighty-six she was married, making a record which easily distances the records of ordinary mortals in the eighties.

BELOW THE EQUATOR.

In 1871 yellow fever carried off 26,000 persons at Buenos Ayres, or over ten per cent of the population.

Owing to improved machinery the sugar output in Peru in 1891 was 20,000,000 pounds greater than in the preceding year.

Many farms in the uplands of South America have been stocked with cattle carried on men's backs over the mountains when young.

In 1866 the Chilams valley in Peru was practically a desert and worth nothing. An old Inca aqueduct was discovered and at a cost of \$3,000 was put in working order, making the region very valuable.

In all past records the accepted estimate of casualties in modern warfare has been in the ratio of four men wounded to one killed. The percentage in the Chilean fighting with the new Mauser rapid-fire gun was four killed to one wounded. The warfare of the future will be slaughter by the wholesale.

On the Safe Side.

Everybody knows this is a good place to be, but everybody does not take measures to be there. An efficient preventive places us on the safe side of incipient disease, and there is no one more reliable than Hostetter's Stomach Bitters in cases where the kidneys are inactive, which is but the preliminary to various destructive maladies, which disregarded have a fatal termination. Bright's disease, diabetes, dropsy, edema, are but the outgrowths of neglected inaction of the kidneys and bladder. They should be checked at the outset with the Bitters, which will prevent their progress by arousing the renal organs to activity, and thus place those who resort to this saving medicine on the safe side. This preservative of safety also conquers constipation, liver complaint, malarial fever, nervousness and dyspepsia.

Jiggs: When did we first begin sending missionaries to Africa? Grieg: Let's see. When were the rum distilleries first started?

"Hanson's Magic Corn Salve." Warranted to cure or money refunded. Ask your druggist for it. Price 15 cents.

"That's what I call a good deal of a take off," lamented the carriage horse, turning back to look at its docked tail.

Letter carriers may be seen collecting letters at midnight, but this doesn't explain why some males don't arrive till morning.

"How old is your missus?" "I can hardly tell—but she only goes to parties where the rooms are lighted with gas."

"Do you find your new maid very trying?" Mrs. Nuwile: No, the trouble is she won't do anything.

"Do you think that wealth brings happiness?" "I do not know. I'm a poet."

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